Diaspora and media

concepts and case studies

Guest lecture Masaryk University Brno, November 2018

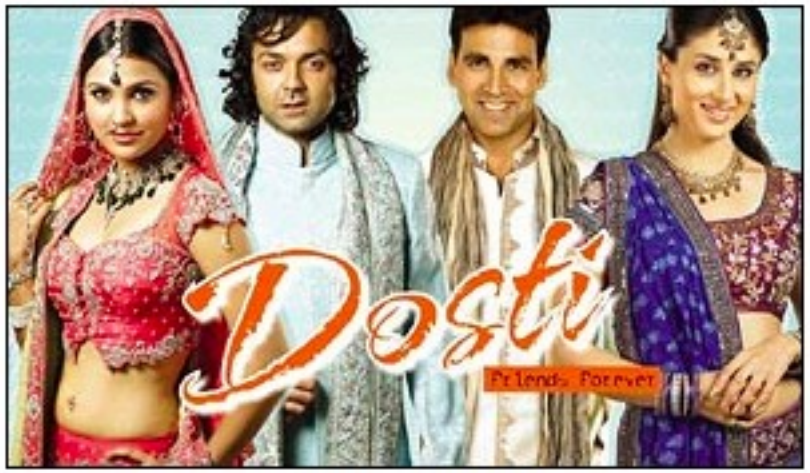
Prof. dr. Kevin Smets (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium)

Structure

- Diaspora and globalization
- Different approaches to diaspora
  - Case studies
- Minorities, ’Otherness’ and media

The Telegraph

Bollywood is more successful in UK than British-made films



Dosti, which has grossed around £1 million in Britain

New migrants living in 'cultural bubbles' need to improve their English skills, Government warns

By political reporter Henry Belot

Updated 7 Mar 2018, 6:04am

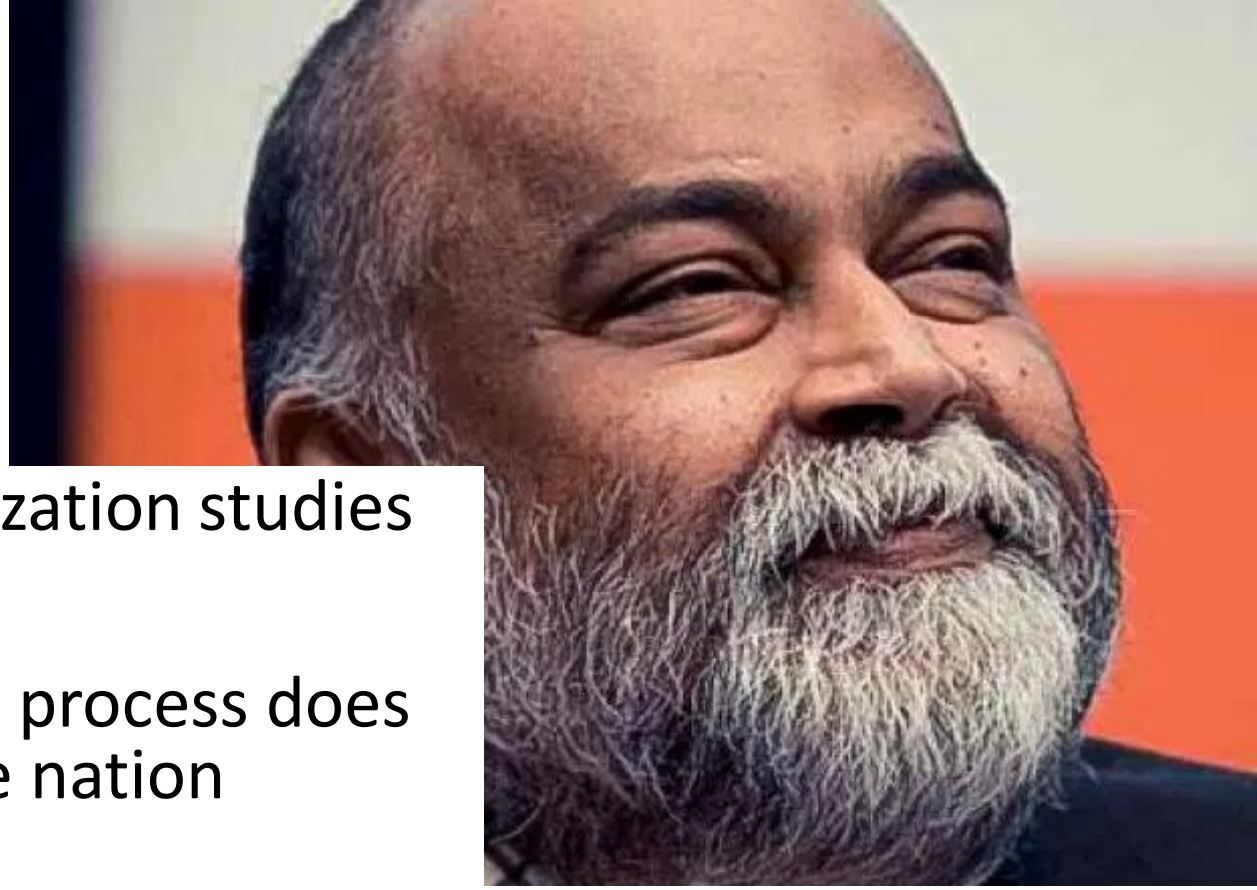
Australia's successful multicultural society is at risk with many migrants failing to integrate and develop proficient English skills, Citizenship Minister Alan Tudge has warned.

The Federal Government has revived its push for migrants to face tougher language tests and to demonstrate their commitment to Australian values.

Sweeping changes to citizenship laws were abandoned last year, with Labor and the crossbench criticising the changes as too harsh.

PHOTO: Citizenship Minister Alan Tudge wants to revive some of the changes abandoned last year. (AAP: Lukas Coch)

Arjun Appadurai



- Influential anthropologist in globalization studies
- *Modernity at Large*: modernization process does not operate exclusively through the nation
- ”Being at home” has many different levels
  - A post-national view on the world emerges
- Globalization: “mediation” and “motion” increasingly hand in hand

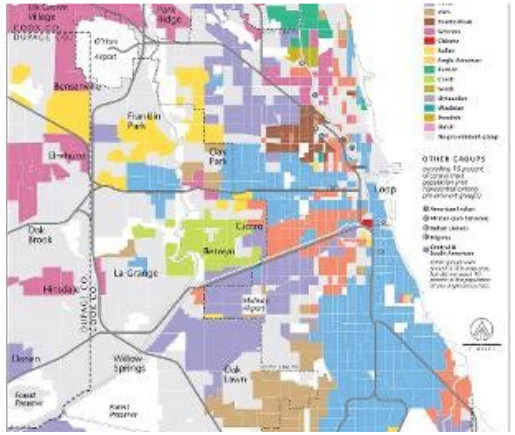
Modernity at Large (1996)

Disjuncture and Difference (1990)

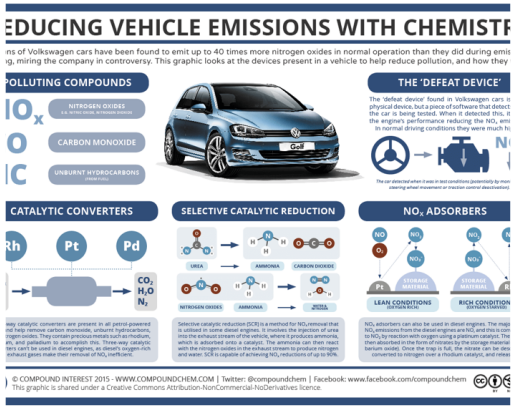
Arjun Appadurai: 5 scapes

- Global capitalism
  - ≠ organized in a linear way
  - ≠ centre vs. periphery
  - ≠ one way flows of capital, goods, ideas...

- Instead:
  - A complex system of interacting ruptures
  - 5 main “scapes” determine our (imagined) world and identites
  - Each community positions itself differently in these scapes



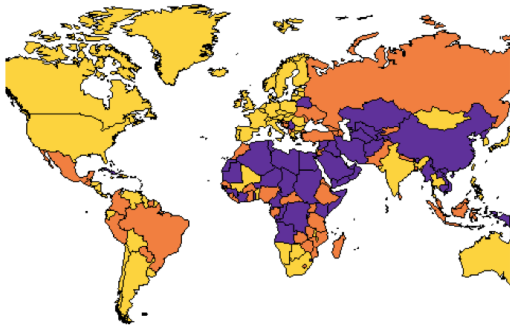
Ethnoscapes



Technoscapes

Financescapes

Mediascapes

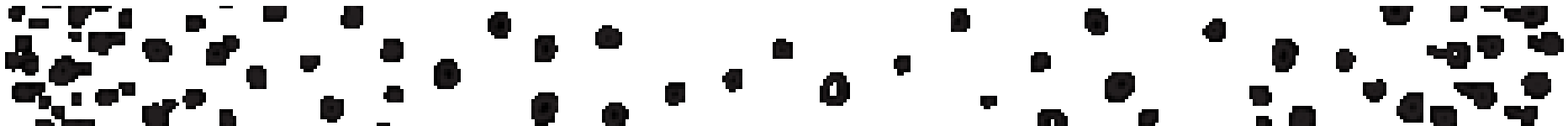


Ideoscapes

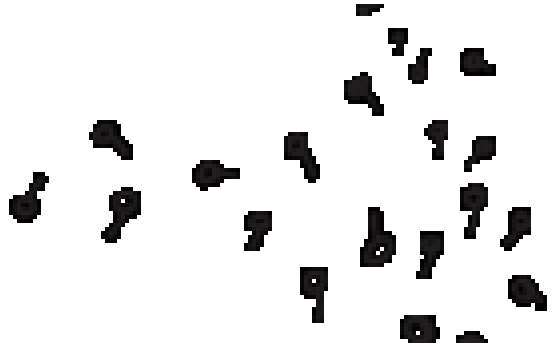
Diaspora

- Most important authors
  - Robin Cohen, James Clifford, Rogers Brubaker, Khachig Tölölyan, Homi Bhabha, Paul Gilroy, Avtar Brah
  - Diaspora and media: Myria Georgiou, Roza Tsagarousianou, Karim H. Karim, Idil Osman, Janroj Keles, John Budarick …

- Concept
  - Origin: Greek *diaspeirō* (to sow, to spread out)
  - For a long time mostly used for Jewish diaspora
    - Binding factor: expulsion, prosecution, fleeing...

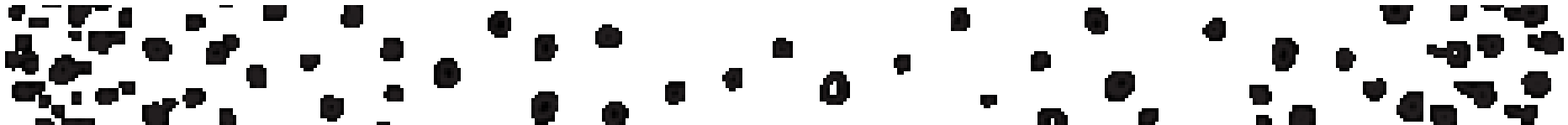


Diaspora



- Diaspora 1990s
  - Concept develops in anthropology, migration studies, media studies
  - Sociologist Brubaker: “the diaspora diaspora”

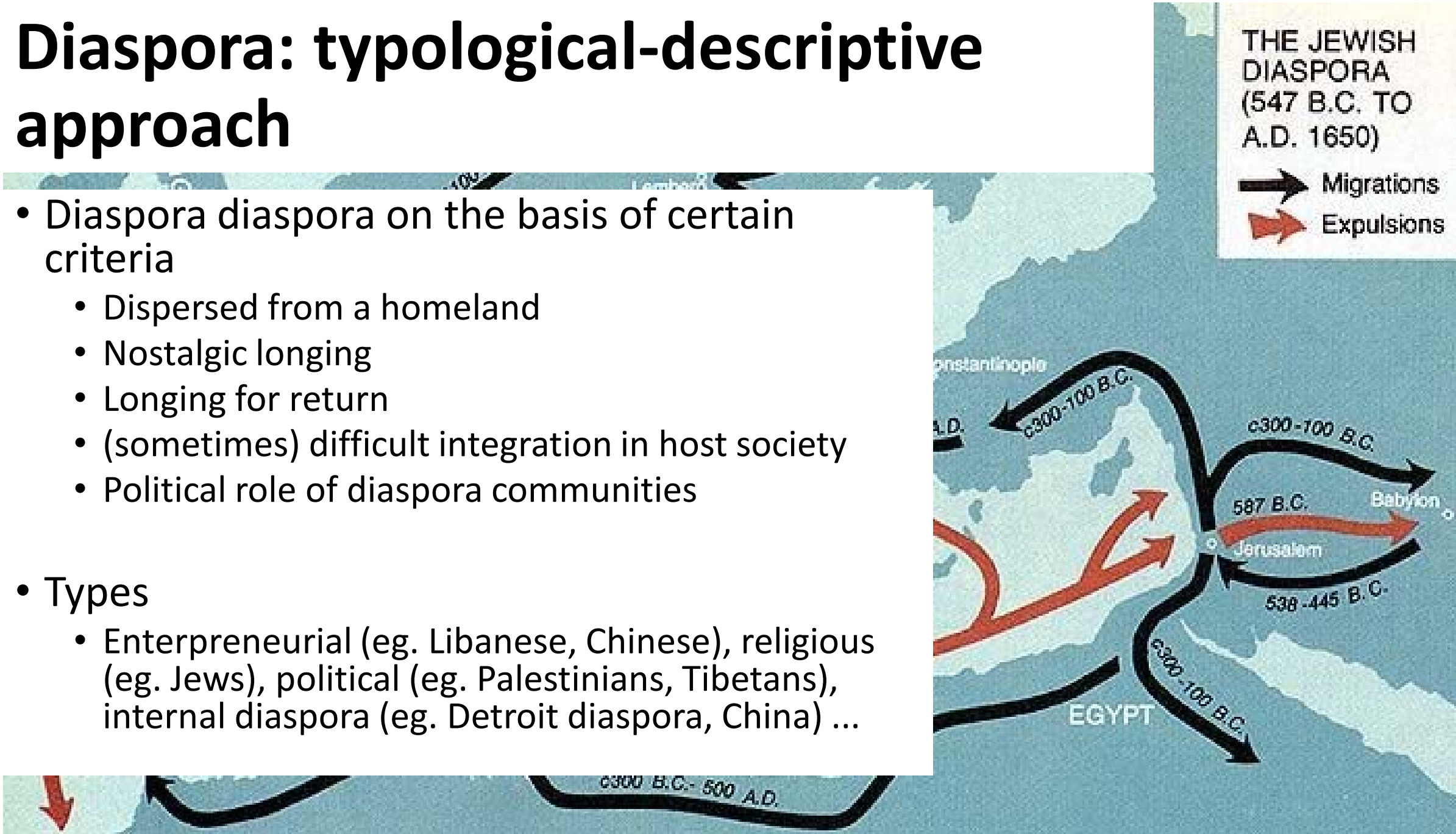
- Two approaches (see text Budarick, 2014)
  - Typological-descriptive approach
  - Social-constructivist approach



Diaspora: typological-descriptive approach

- Diaspora diaspora on the basis of certain criteria
  - Dispersed from a homeland
  - Nostalgic longing
  - Longing for return
  - (sometimes) difficult integration in host society
  - Political role of diaspora communities

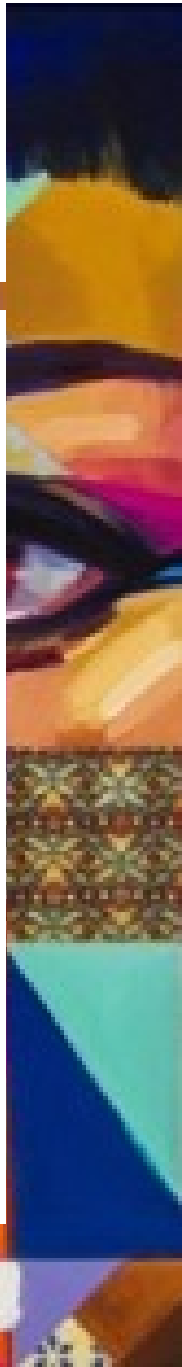
- Types
  - Enterpreneurial (eg. Libanese, Chinese), religious (eg. Jews), political (eg. Palestinians, Tibetans), internal diaspora (eg. Detroit diaspora, China) ...



Keeping up with the Genocide?

Diaspora: social-constructivist approach

- Dissatisfied with typological approach
  - Terms become confusing
  - Essentialist and reductionist
- Influence postmodernism, cultural studies, postcolonial studies
- ~~Emphasis on ethnicity, roots, geography~~
- Replaced with transnational imagination, practices and cultural change

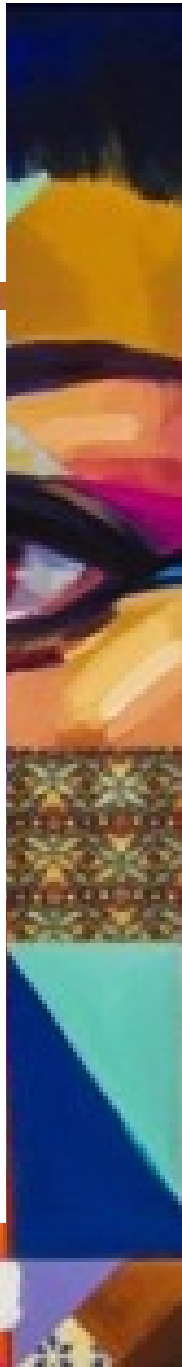


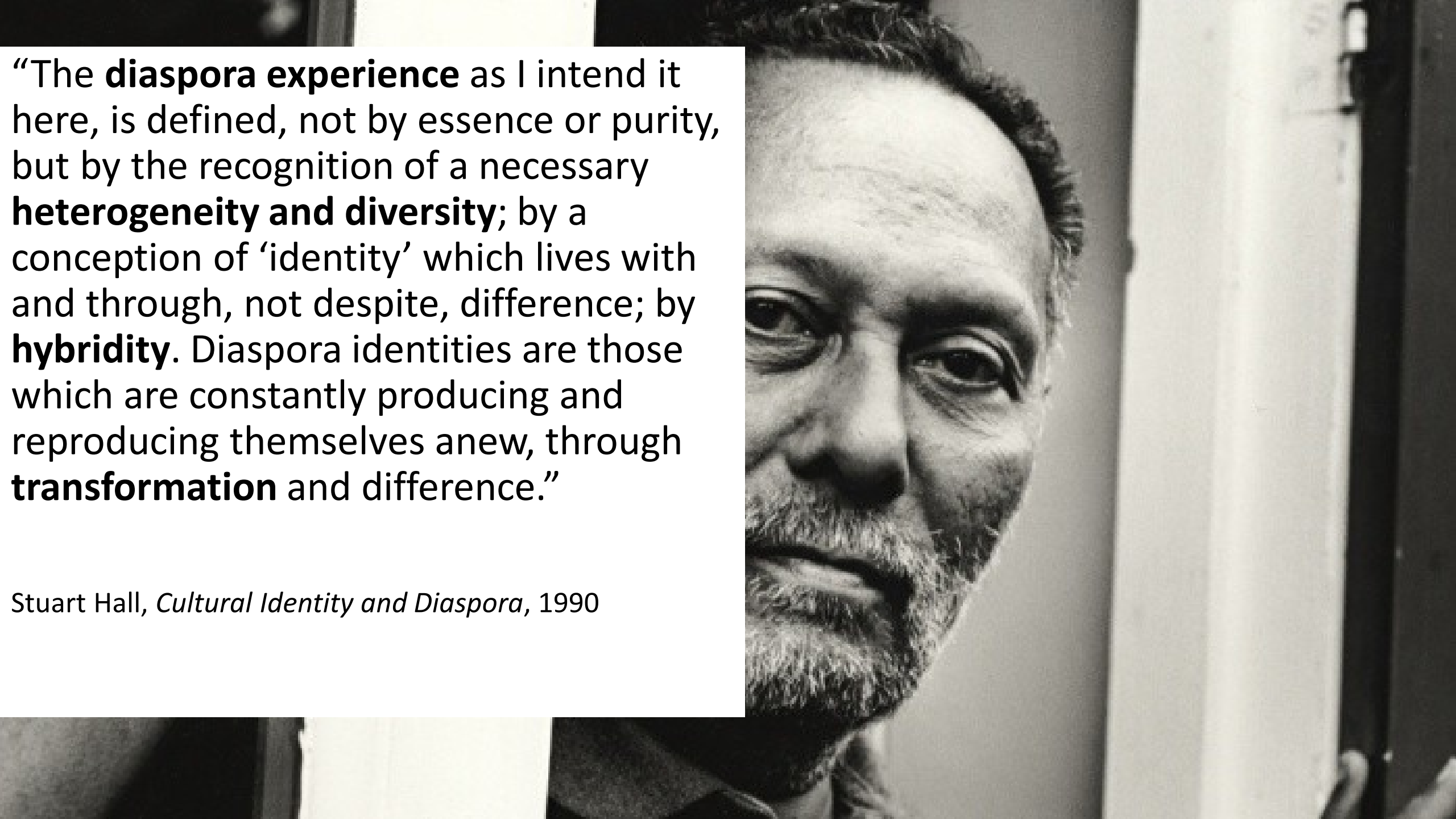
Diaspora: social-constructivist approach

- Diaspora as a social condition and a form of consciousness

- Emphasis on solidarity and connectivity
  →diaspora has to be constructed continously
  →importance of communicative practices

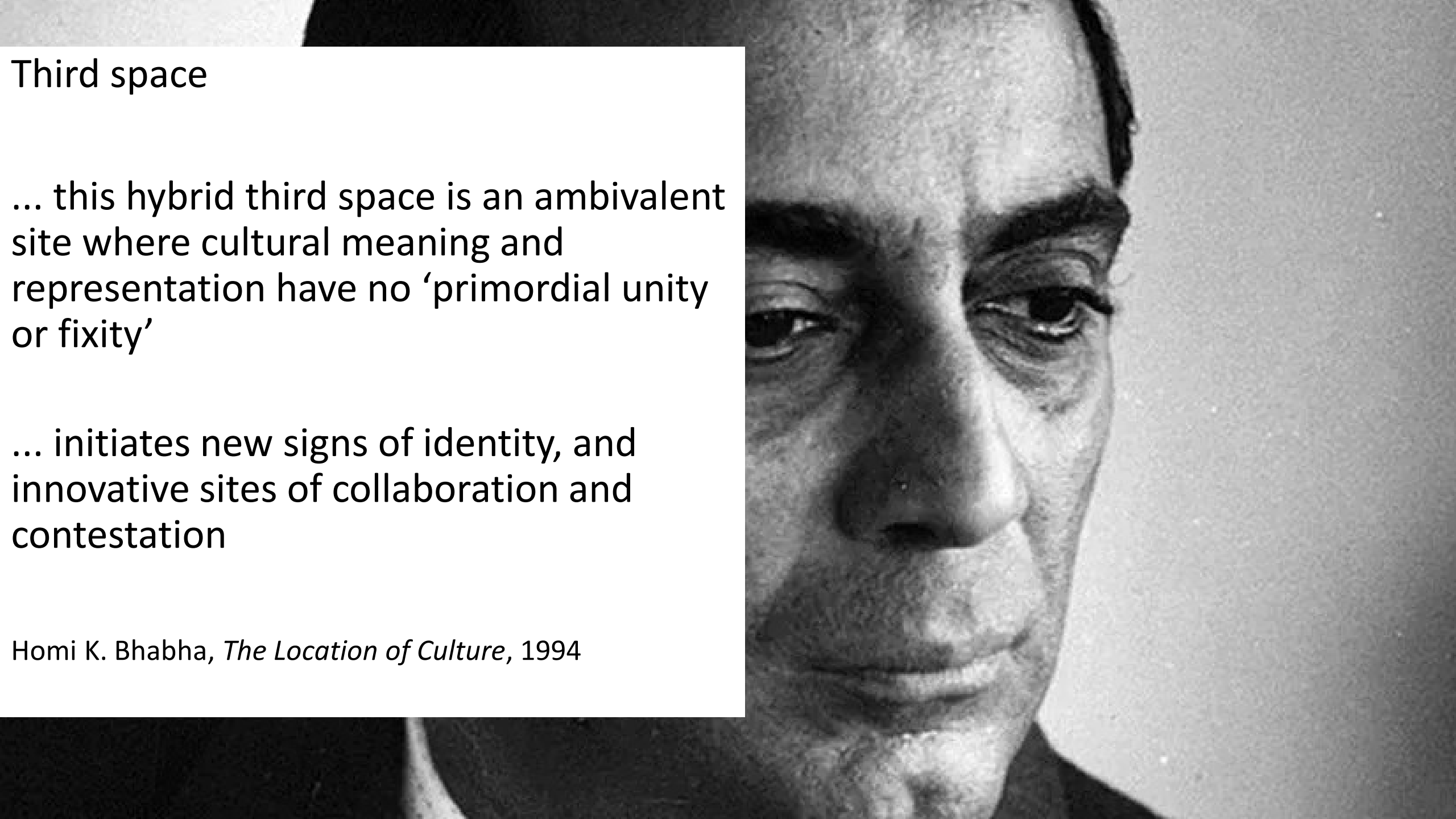
- Shift away from essentializing diaspora identity
  →recognizing hybrid identities and “Third Space”
  →recognizing transforming identities





"The **diaspora experience** as I intend it here, is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary **heterogeneity and diversity**; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by **hybridity**. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through **transformation** and difference."

Stuart Hall, *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*, 1990



Third space

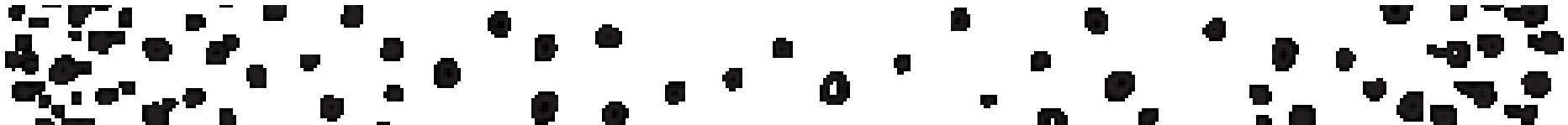
... this hybrid third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no ‘primordial unity or fixity’

... initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994

Diaspora and ‘Othering’

- Constructing diaspora identities is often a two-way process of distinguishing Us versus Them
  - Homeland <-> diaspora ‘Othering’
  - Host land <-> diaspora ‘Othering’
- Role of the media and representations (see part 2)



Diaspora and media

- Are closely connected in all of these approaches

- In typological-descriptive approach
  - Homeland media as an “umbillical chord”
  - Homelad media ←→ “integration”
  - Homeland media symbolize “long distance nationalism”
  - Mediatized spectacle and ritual
    - Eg. remembrances, sport competitions...

Diaspora and media

- In social-constructionist approach
  - Homeland media are but one source of identity building
  - Positionality towards homeland media can be ambiguous
  - Imaginations through networks (beyond homeland networks)
  - Attention for media production in ”Third Space”: diasporic media, ethnic media, transnational media, ...
- Two cases
  - Media production in diaspora and the nation state → Kurdish TV in Europe
  - Film-viewing as community building → Turkish film audiences

Case 1: Kurdish TV in Europe

- Mediascape in Europe in the 1990s
- [Turkey viewed] “each satellite dish as a Kurdish flag hoisted on the rooftops of every building in the south-east” (Amir Hassanpour)
- “Sovereignty in the sky”
- Carrying out Kurdish culture

Case 2: Turkish film audiences

- Very big offer of Turkish films in Europe (via Germany)
- Temporary “Third Space” in public space of the multiplex
- Pride and nationalism
- Pleasure and community-building
- Shared experiences, but also conflicts

Some reflections

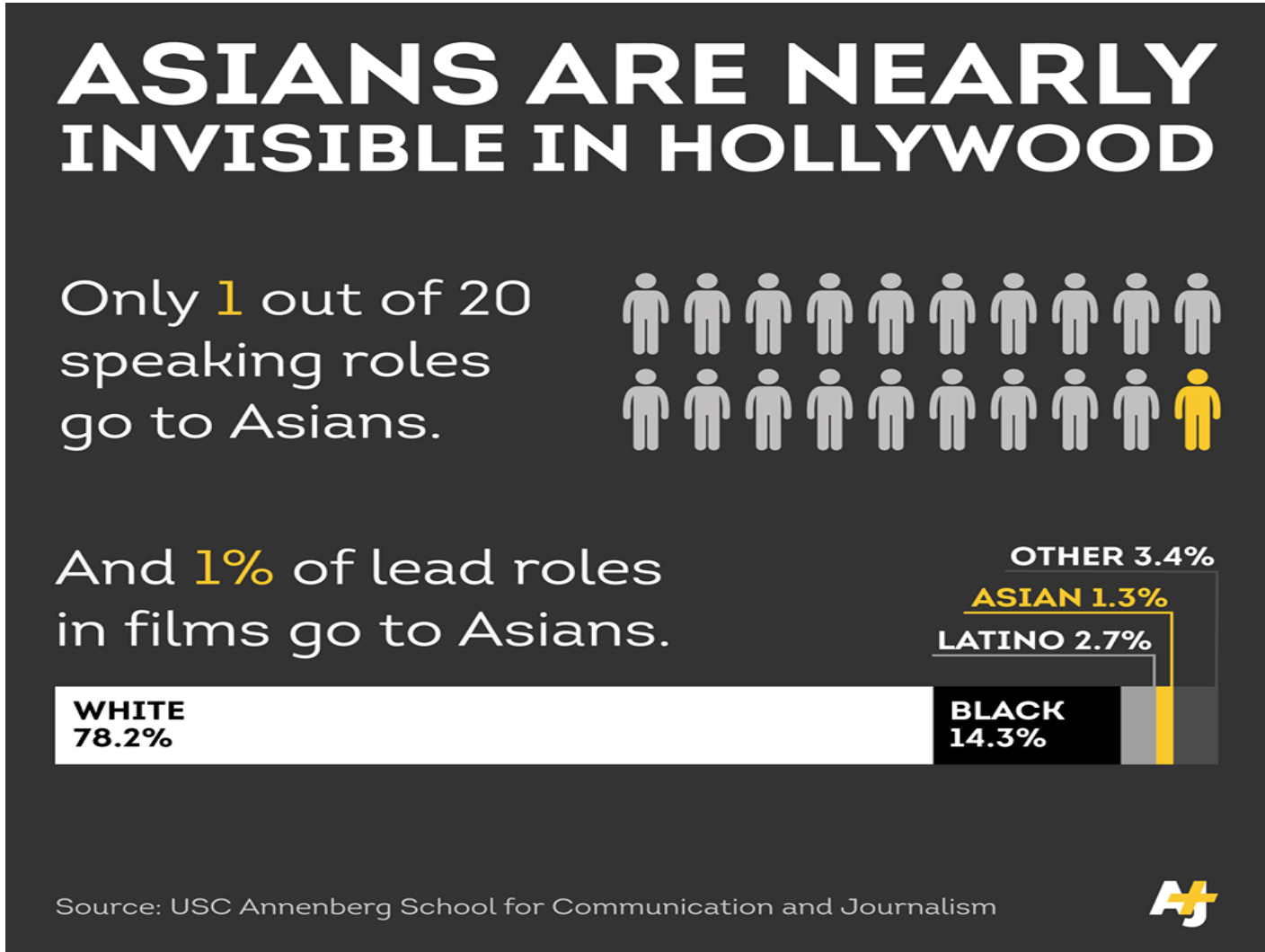
- Limits of the diaspora concept
  - Can be excluding certain people
  - What about “expats”, refugees, Erasmus students..
  - Intersectionality?

- Variations: queer diaspora, digital diaspora ...

Part 2: Minorities, Otherness and media

- Questions of
  - Visibility and invisibility
  - Representativeness
  - Stereotyping

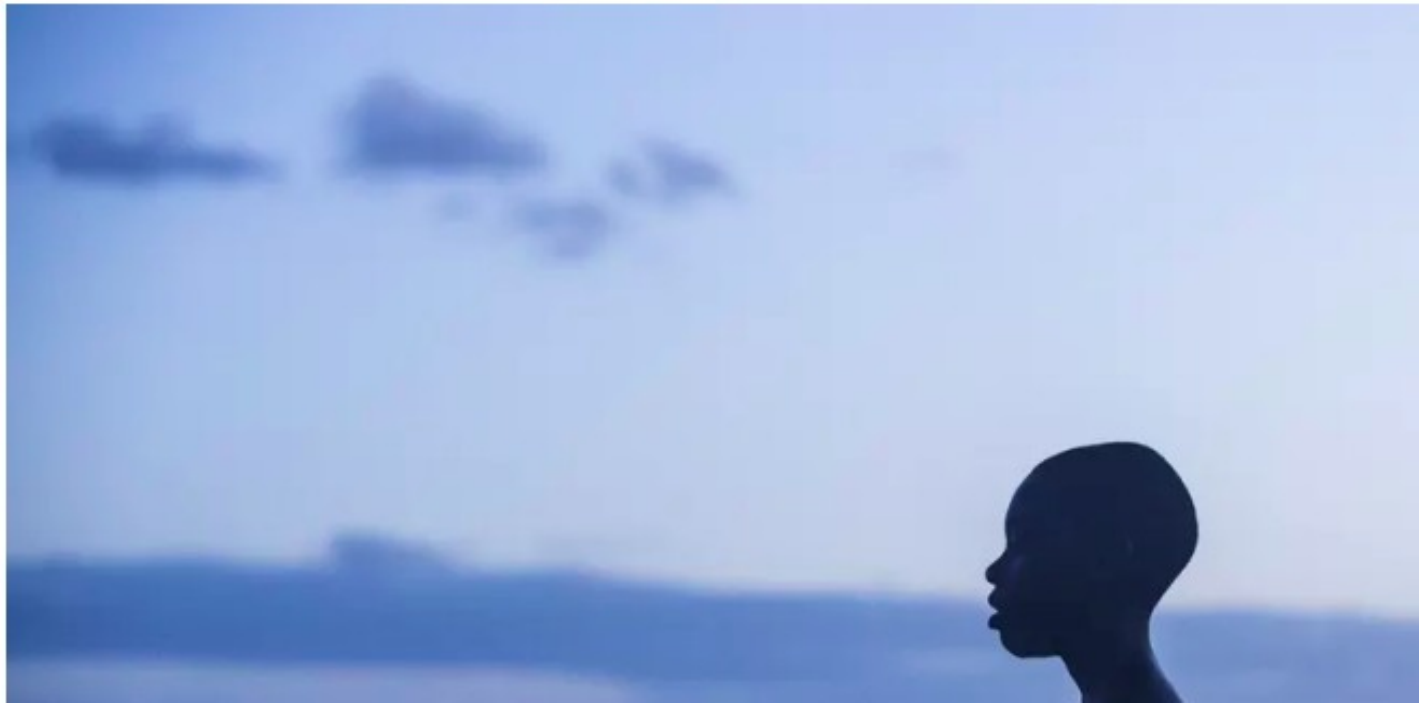
- Start with a few recent examples

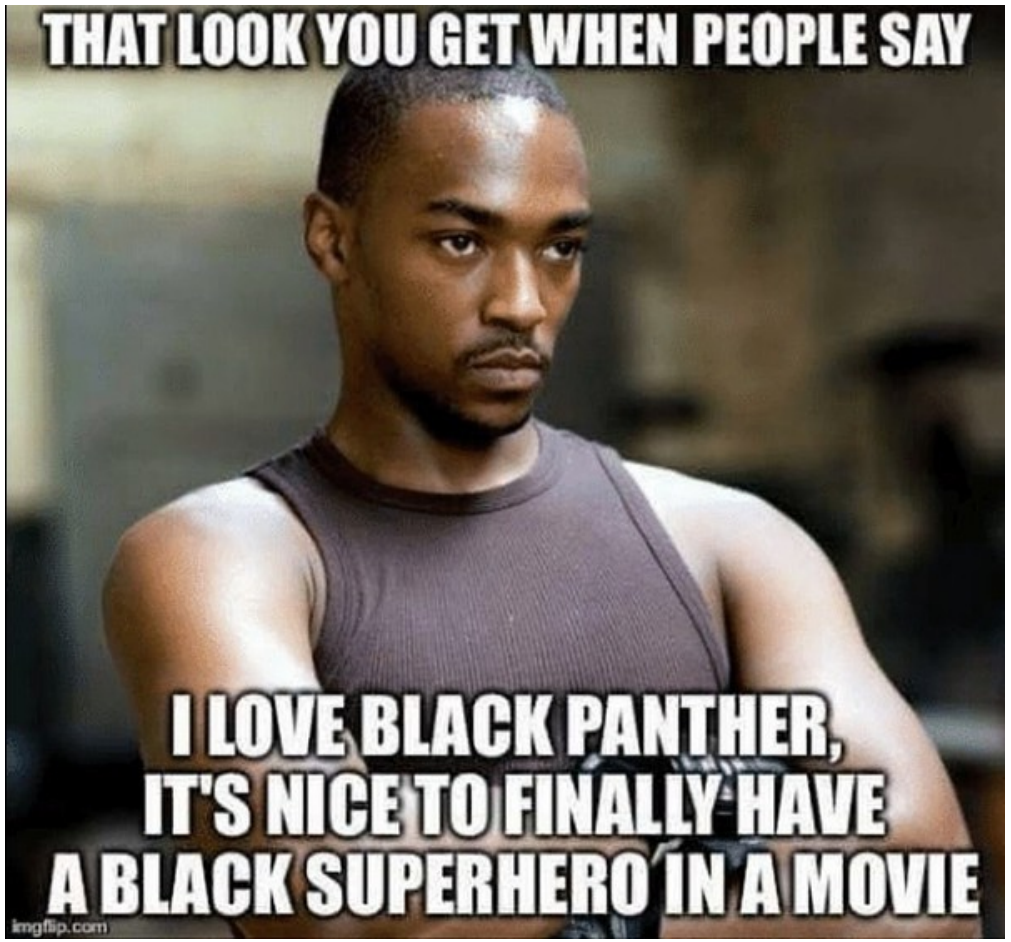


www.graagtraag.be
0800 123 12

Graag traag
in onze straat.
Het kleurrijke volk van de Turnhoutsebaan.

Did #OscarsSoWhite work? Looking beyond Hollywood's diversity drought





Ceci n’est pas une pomme – René Magritte 1964

Reception

Interpretation by an "audience"

Production

"The" media

Reference

A "reality"

Representation as a process

- Representation happens through...
  - A combination and selection of...
  - Signs and symbols...
  - Mostly based on convention

  - Also through “techniques” such as mis-en-scène, camera, editing, ...

- Representation becomes powerful through...
  - Repetition
  - Authority
  - (Link with reputation!)

Representation: key concepts and discussions

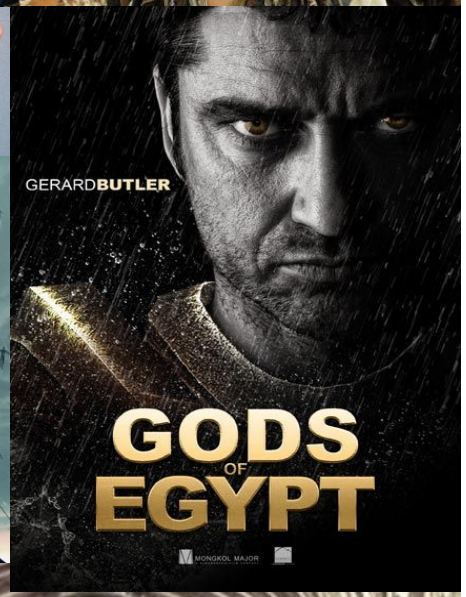
- Symbolic annihilation and under-representation
- Tokenism
- Blackface and whitewashing
- Some figures on Hollywood

- Closer look at 2 discussions
  - Portrayal of women
  - Orientalism

Symbolic annihilation

- Absence and trivilization of certian groups or themes
- Being represented symbolizes power
- Historical and structural!

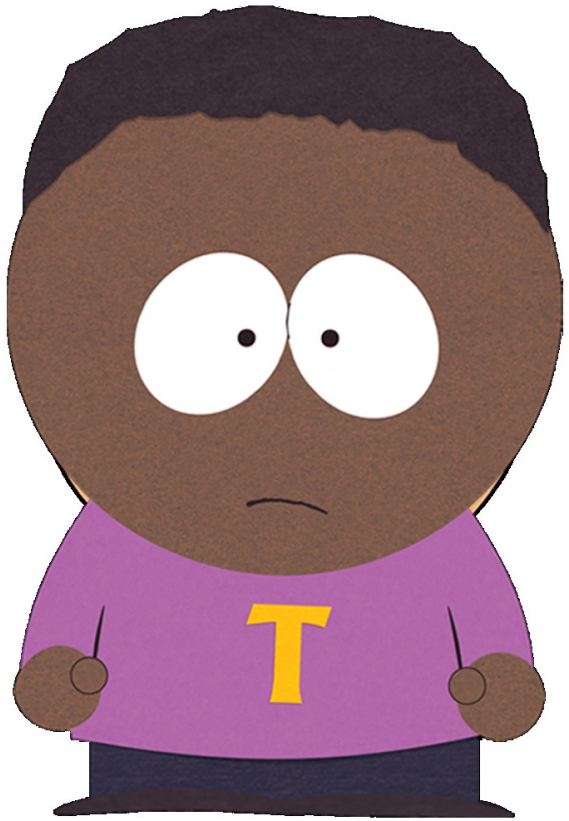
RUSSELL CROWE
JENNIFER CONNELLY
RAY WINSTONE
EMMA WATSON
LOGAN LERMAN
ANTHONY HOPKINS
NOAH

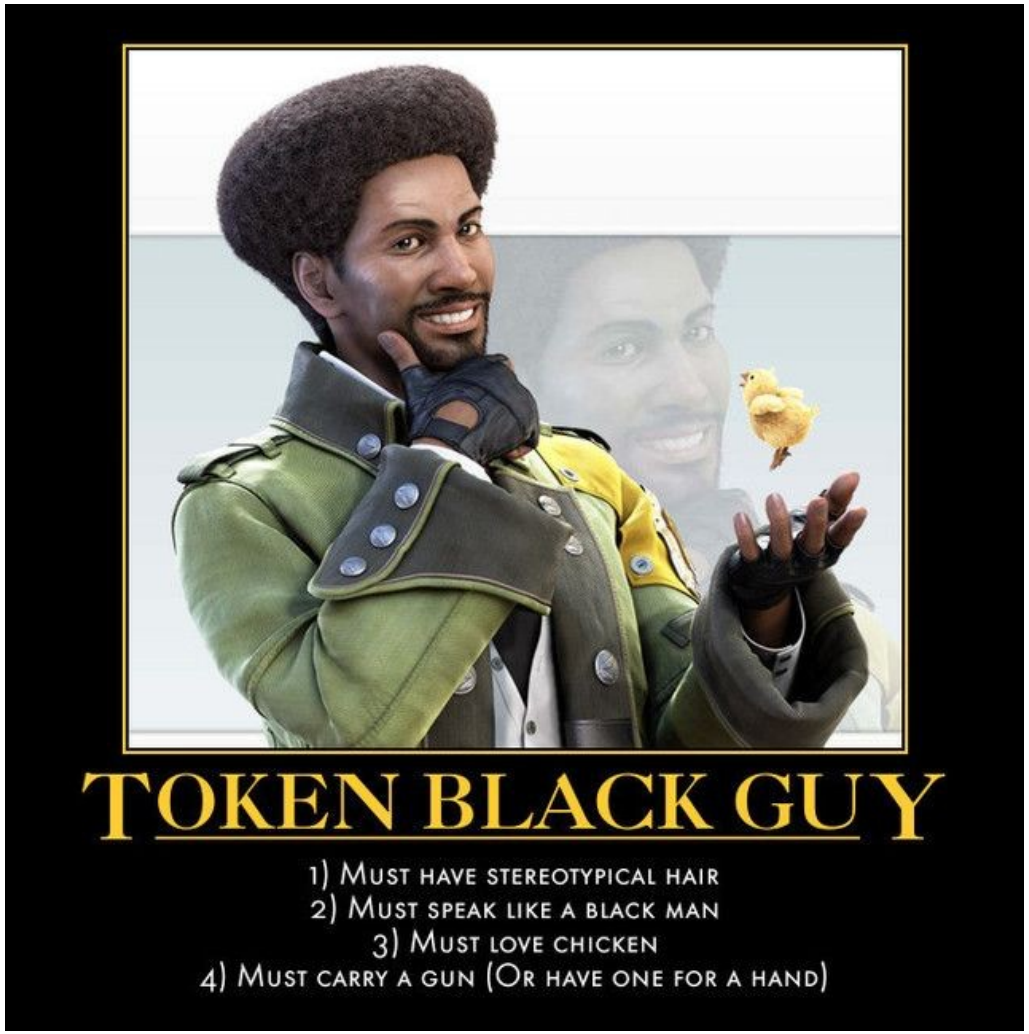

GERARD BUTLER
GODS OF EGYPT

F·R·I·E·N·D·S

Tokenism

- “Fake inclusion” that maintains minority-majority logic

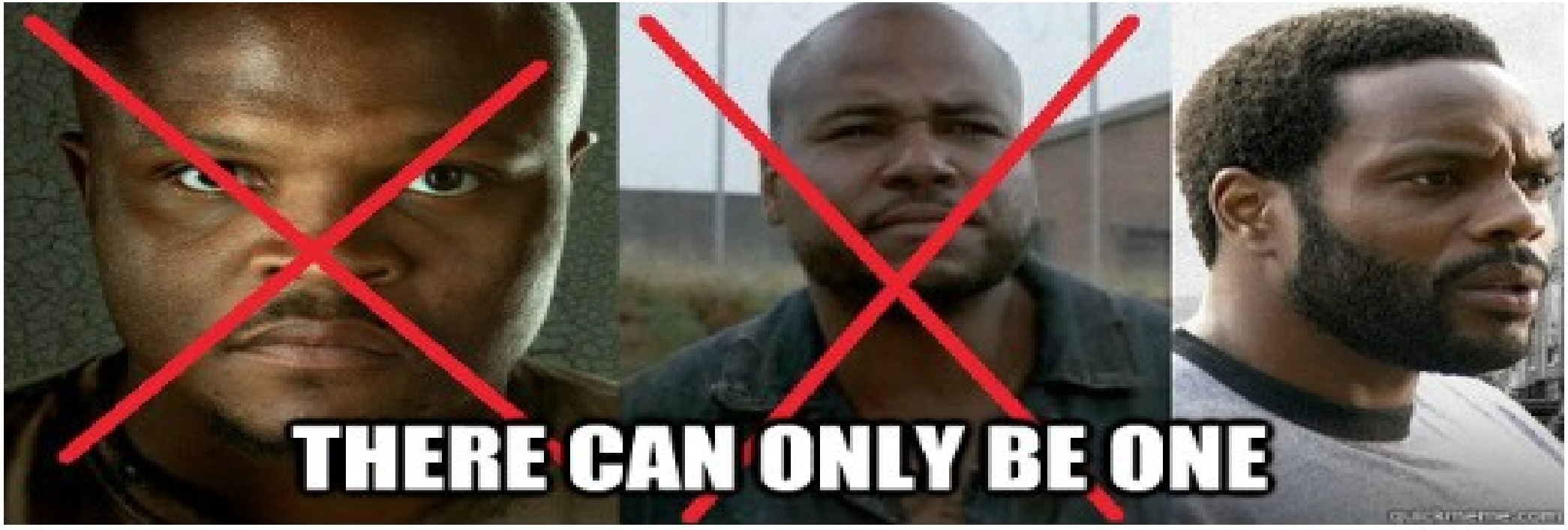

T


TOKEN BLACK GUY
1) Must have stereotypical hair
2) Must speak like a black man
3) Must love chicken
4) Must carry a gun (Or have one for a hand)

“Token test”

- http://geekoutsider.com/2013/06/23/the-token-test-a-bechdel-test-for-characters-of-color-in-fiction/

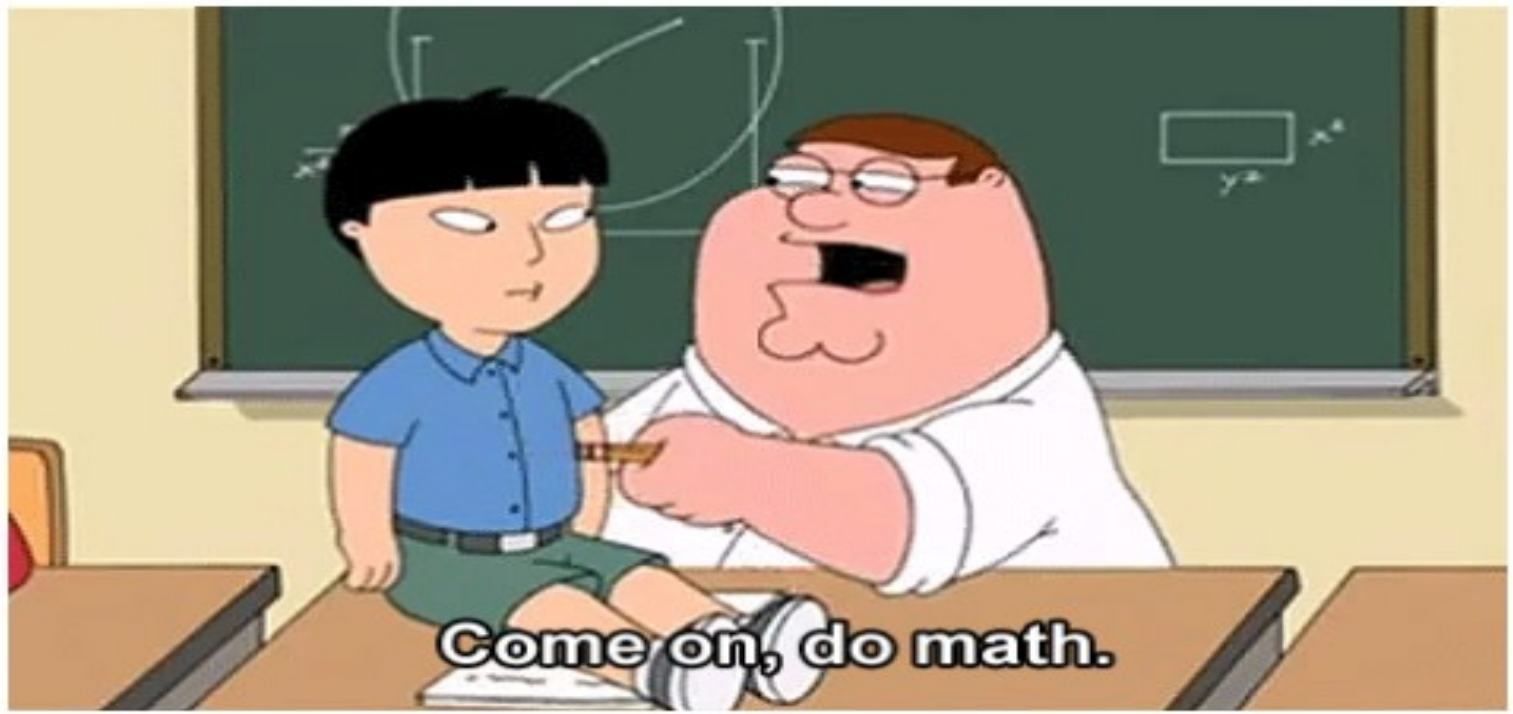
(1) have at least two characters of color,



who (2) aren't somehow related or dating

and (3) regularly speak more than a few lines

(4) about something that has nothing to do with race or racial stereotypes



Blackface and whitewashing

Al Jolson in *The Jazz Singer* (1927)

Prince of Persia (2010), Disney
None of the lead characters in the movie were played by actors of Middle Eastern descent. The main hero was played by Jake Gyllenhaal.

Zoe Saldana as Nina Simone?

THE DIVERSITY GAP IN SCI-FI & FANTASY FILMS

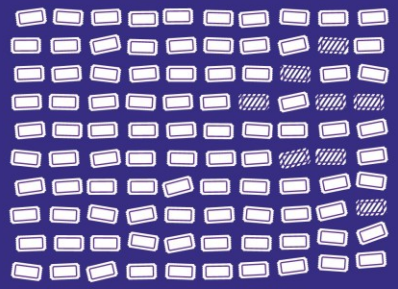
BASED ON THE TOP 100 DOMESTIC GROSSING SCI-FI & FANTASY MOVIES

AS OF 2014

MOVIES WITH A
FEMALE PROTAGONIST

14%

MOVIES WITH A
PROTAGONIST OF COLOR

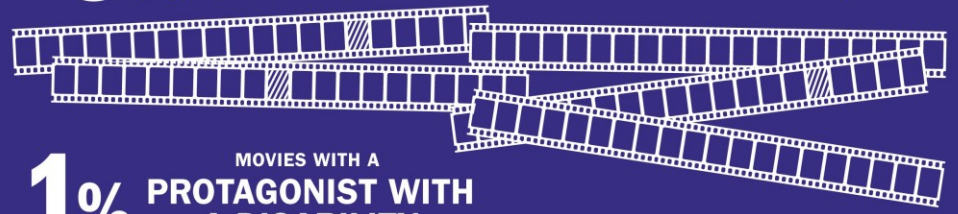


8%
(0% WOMEN OF COLOR)

0% LGBTQ PROTAGONISTS

OF THE EIGHT PROTAGONISTS OF COLOR,
SIX ARE WILL SMITH
AND ANOTHER IS A CARTOON (ALADDIN)

3% MOVIES WITH A **VILLAIN OF COLOR**



MOVIES WITH A
1% PROTAGONIST WITH A DISABILITY

ABOUT EVERYONE · FOR EVERYONE
LEE & LOW BOOKS

for more conversations on diversity, visit
blog.leeandlow.com

"Box Office Mojo." Box Office Mojo. Web. 11 June 2014. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/>
"Internet Movie Database." IMDb. Web. 11 June 2014. <http://www.imdb.com/>
Multiple pages on both sources consulted for casting and movie gross information.

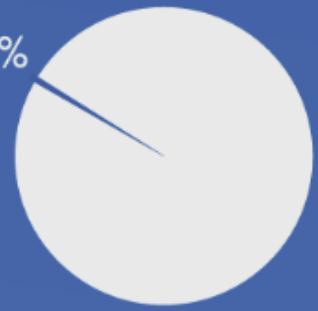
Disclaimer: Statistics for this study were compiled by the LEE & LOW staff. While we are bright, caring people, we are not statisticians. We have dutifully listed our sources for this study and have done so with the full knowledge that sites such as Wikipedia may not be entirely accurate.

PRODUCED BY LEE & LOW BOOKS. DESIGNED BY BEN MAUTNER. © 2014

Women of Color & The Top 500 Films

Just 6 of the top 500 box office films of all-time feature a protagonist who is a woman of color.*

1 live action film
5 animated films



None of these films are in the top 200

#248 *Pocahontas*
#304 *Mulan*
#353 *Spirited Away*
#359 *Lilo & Stitch*
#369 *The Princess and the Frog*
#447 *Sister Act*

Case and discussion: representation of women

- From overtly “sexist” to “the male gaze”

HOW WOMEN ARE PORTRAYED

ON SCREEN IN THE TOP 500 FILMS

2007-2012

30.8%
of speaking characters are women

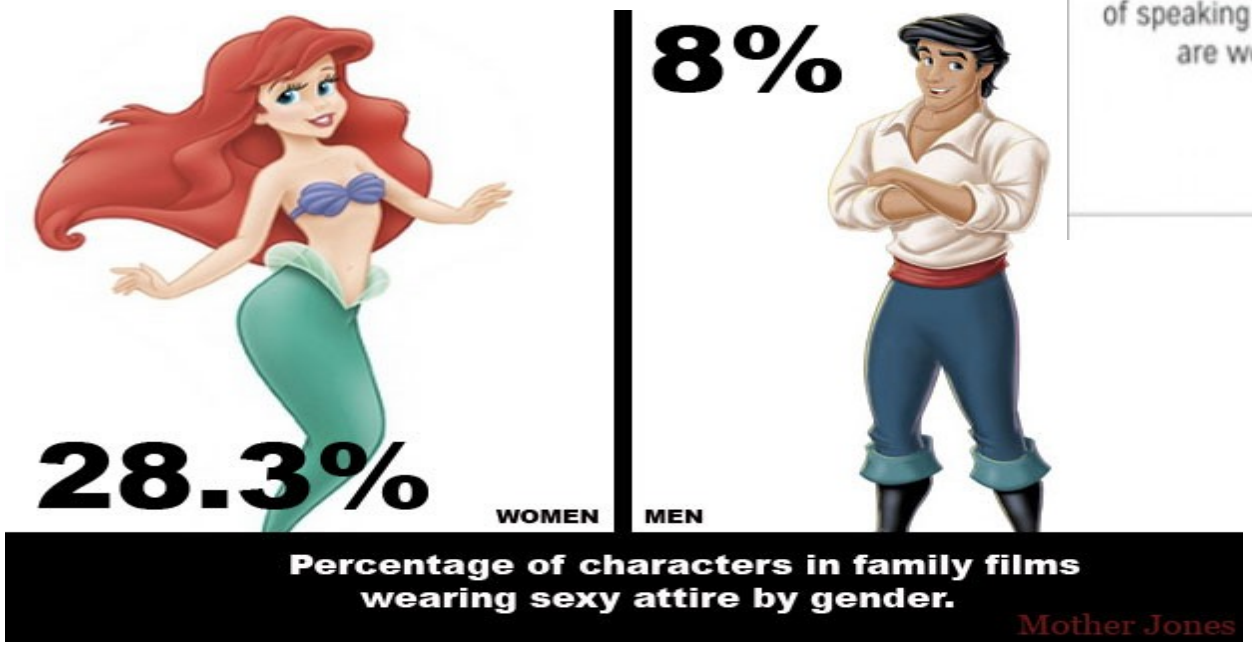
28.8%
of women wore sexually revealing clothes

as opposed to **7.0%** of men

26.2%
of women actors get partially naked

while **9.4%** of men do

10.7%
of movies featured a balanced cast where half of the characters are female



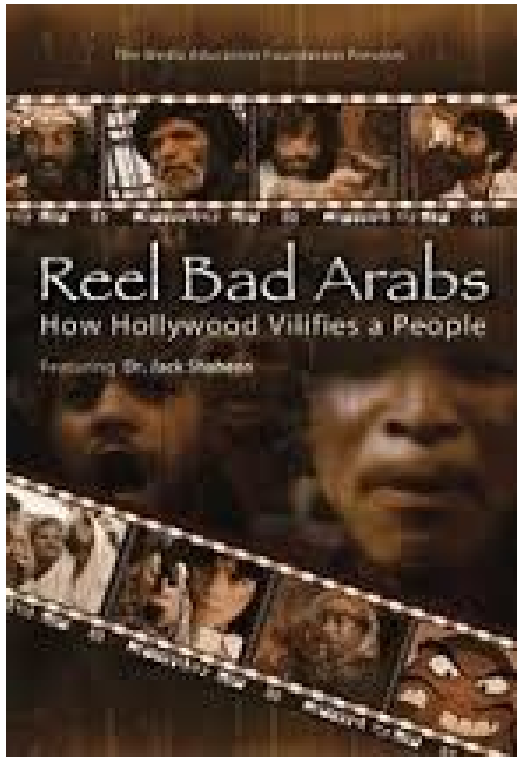
Case and discussion: Orientalism

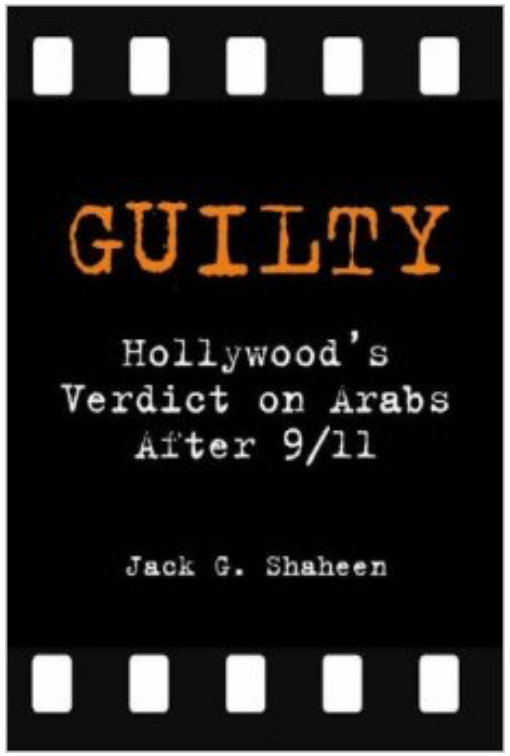
- Term coined by Edward Said
  - The way in which the Arab World and Midde East are portrayed in Western culture (literature, visual arts, ...)
  - Backwards / exotic / erotic / adventurous
  - → “The colonial gaze” provides pleasure and “safe adventure”
- Late 20th century: element of danger / terrorism becomes more prominently attached as a sign

872 A
Jeune Femme kabyle parée de ses bijoux.
Collection Spéciale P.
ND, Phot.

Oriëntalisme in cinema

- Jack Shaheen: book and documentary *Reel Bad Arabs*





- Short clip with examples “Arabs in Hollywood” by Thabit Al Mawaly https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cefdgEGDinA